

Recommendation on the accreditation of the proposed Goulburn-Murray Water Resource Plan

Meeting No. 140 of the Authority

Recommendation

1. On 11 February 2020, consistent with a process agreed between the Commonwealth and Victoria under subsection 73(14)(a) of the *Water Act 2007* (Cth) ('the Act'), the Minister requested that the Murray-Darling Basin Authority ('the Authority') assess the proposed Goulburn-Murray Water Resource Plan ('the proposed WRP') submitted by Victoria to the Authority on 26 November 2019, in accordance with s 63 of the Act.
2. The proposed WRP at **Attachment A** is comprised of:
 - a. All material in Column 3 of the Index Table which is marked "*Goulburn-Murray water resource plan area*"; and
 - b. All material in Column 3 of the Index Table which is marked "*Victoria's North and Murray water resource plan area*"; and
 - c. All material in Columns 1, 2 and 4 in corresponding rows of (a), (b) and (c) above; and
 - d. Table B of the Index Table; and
 - e. All material from the Comprehensive Report which is referenced in (a) and (b) above.
3. The Authority is satisfied that the proposed WRP is consistent with the relevant Basin Plan (*Basin Plan 2012* (Cth), version F2018C00451, registered on 11 July 2018 and in force as of the date of the Authority's recommendation), as is required by section 55(2) of the Act including:
 - a. the requirements for water resource plans, and
 - b. the long-term annual diversion limits ('SDLs') for the water resources of the WRP area.
4. In considering consistency the Authority has had regard to the legislative framework within which the proposed WRP operates, as is required by section 55(3) of the Act.
5. In exercising its powers and performing its functions, the Authority has had regard to the Basin Plan and the extent to which the proposed WRP is consistent with the Basin Plan (in accordance with sections 56(1)(a) and (b) of the Act).

6. In arriving at its recommendation, the Authority has taken into account the form of the proposed WRP delivered by Victoria; being that no legislative instruments from the Victorian water management framework have been incorporated into the proposed WRP, and the proposed WRP is as such a stand-alone instrument that independently imposes some obligations and explains how Victoria manages its water resources through its existing water management framework, without this framework being put forward for the purposes of accreditation.
7. The Authority has also considered that Victoria does not have a Long-Term Watering Plan that is consistent with Chapter 8 of the Basin Plan. Instead, the information required for demonstrating delivery of environmental outcomes, including for groundwater-dependent ecosystems, is explained in the proposed WRP, and a commitment is included that Victoria will review and update its relevant Long-Term Watering Plan following accreditation to better align with the requirements of Chapter 8 of the Basin Plan.
8. To ensure consistency with the Basin Plan trading rules, the proposed WRP contains a rule which requires the characteristics of water access rights in the Upper Ovens Water Supply Protection Area of the Northern Victoria WRP area and Goulburn-Murray WRP area to be maintained for certain trades. The proposed WRP does this by requiring downstream licences to be converted from all-year licences to winter-fill licences before any trade occurs. This ensures that when any entitlement is traded upstream, the characteristic of timing is the same in the two locations. The Authority notes that while this conversion process is not in place yet, the proposed WRP indicates that Goulburn-Murray Water will need to identify a process for managing water access rights of this type before trades are approved in this area, to avoid being inconsistent with the proposed WRP and the Basin Plan trading rules.
9. The Authority notes that the proposed WRP has not included the proportion of take which is measured in accordance with agreed metering standards (AS4747) as recommitted to in the Basin Compliance Compact, as Victoria have determined that it is not currently possible to estimate the proportion of water taken that is measured by different classes of meters. The Authority expects that following accreditation of the proposed WRP, and the determination of any exemptions to the metering standard that Victoria chooses to put in place, the proposed WRP will be amended by Victoria to include the proportion of take that is metered to agreed standards.
10. Victoria submitted the proposed WRPs for the Northern Victoria, Goulburn-Murray and Victorian Murray WRP areas as one document, including one index table and one supporting comprehensive report. This decision is only concerned with the proposed Goulburn-Murray Water Resource Plan, as identified in paragraph 6.
11. **On this basis the Authority gives the Minister the proposed Goulburn-Murray WRP and recommends that the Minister accredit the proposed WRP.**
12. The Authority's detailed reasoning is set out in the document titled 'Water Resource Plan assessment report, proposed Goulburn-Murray Water Resource Plan', March 2020.

